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RELIGIOUS IMPULSES OF MAHARAJA DALIP SINGH

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PREFACE

Dr. Ganda Singh Memorial Trust every year holds Research Paper Competition and after evaluation prizes are awarded to the Best. Second Best and Third Best Research Papers, This Research Paper written by S. Sawaran Singh Sanehi from Shahpur (Jalandhar) has been awarded the Third Prize this year. He has written a very nice and vivid account of Religious Impulses of Maharaja Dalip Singh in this paper. This Research Paper is being published as Tract No. 453.

RELIGIOUS IMPULSES OF MAHARAJA DALIP SINGH

Maharaja Ranjit Singh is termed by many historians as the Sikh monarch and his reign as the Kingdom of the Sikhs solely because he himself was a Sikh and undoubtedly the Sikhism had proliferated to a considerable extent during his rule. He had an unwavering trust in the Sikh Gurus and reverence for their code of conduct. Having taken bath early in the morning as prescribed by the Gurus, the first task the Maharaja would do was to offer his morning prayers followed by listening to the Litany for hours. Instead of accepting any invaluable thing for his personal use, his custom had been to proffer the same in the Darbar o Satgurus. A rare and most beautiful canopy, sent to him by the Nizam of South as a personal gift in 1826, was presented by him at the Golden Temple, Amritsar because of the same idiosyncrasy. He yearned to see such Sikhs who had been fortunate of seeing Guru Gobind Singh and when an intensive search had resulted in tracing such a Sikh, the Maharaja time and again had kissed his graced eyes, applied the dust of his feet on his forehead and circumambulated him as a mark of respect. He stayed him at his Seesh Mahal (glass palace) and finally had seen him off by offering enough money and clothes etc.

Having violated the code of conduct, he was once convicted of profanity by Akali Phoolo Singh who awarded him the punishment of the lashes. The Maharaja had readily surrendered himself for the same notwithstanding his royal status. It was a unique example of his humility on the one hand and on the other, it signified his sense of veneration towards the code of conduct.

The Lion of the Punjab, as was observed by Osborne, neither attacked any territory nor ventured any campaign or important task without getting the prior permission of the Holy Granth by

way of sortilege. General Gordon writes that "He kept up, however, the theory of the Khalsa, attributing any success to the favour of the Guru in the name of the Lord. "God the helper-Ranjit Singh" was his sign-manual ¹

As did the Maharaja himself observe the Sikh outlook so strictly did follow his Sikh courtiers and officials. His turban depicted in most of his pictures does not represent the traditional shape, but his picture with that type of turban was seen by the author at the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta, many years ago. According to an heresay, the moustaches of General Hari Singh Nalwa could support twelve lemons on them. The number of the lemons may be exaggerated, but it signifies the veneration his officials had towards the Sikh way of life.

Maharaja Dalip Singh, born on 4th September 1838, was the youngest prince of Ranjit Singh. Soon after that jovial incident, the health of the Maharaja started deteriorating. He had met Lord Aukland in November 1838 at Ferozepur. That meeting was followed by a feast given by the Maharaja in honour of the Lord at the Shalimar Bagh of Lahore. Some historians² suspect that the Maharaja was administered some lethal dose admixed into wine by the British officials at that function which resulted in the debility of the Lion leading to his slow death as he could not recover his health. It can not certainly be said whether the Maharaja could not attend to the baptism of the newly born child due to his illness and mental tension or due to the very tender age of the prince; but one thing is evident, according to the available records, that the prince had not received the Pahul during his life at Lahore. He thus was a born and not an initiated Sikh.

Giani Gian Singh credits Ranjit Singh for having preserved the pristine purity, observation of the Sikh tenets and maintainance of Sikh discipline during his lifetime but it is also a fact that many defiles had crept into the Sikh religion during the period under observation. The cutting of the hair, for instance, is strictly prohibited in Sikhism and tying of the beard is condemned

1. Gordon, The Sikhs, p. 114

2. Jafar Begh, Punjabi Seeharfian. (a) Dr. Ganda Singh (b) G. Gian Singh

as a prelude to its shaving. The first person to introduce the tying of the beard among Sikhs was none else than Maharaja Sher Singh. What type of practical knowledge pertaining to Sikhism the elder princes could have to pass on to their younger brother and at what time since they were assassinated or murdered one after the other in quick succession? It, therefore, may be conjectured that the boy prince had been imparted little knowledge by his mother Queen Jindan. All the same, the boy must be credited for having maintained his faith and sikh form.

The ruling power plays a vital role in the development and proliferation of any religion. During the reign of Ranjit Singh, even the Brahmins would come from the United Provinces to the Punjab and would embrace Sikhism by receiving baptism. Alexander Burnes confides with reference to some source known to him that, during the rule of Ranjit Singh about 5000 persons were initiated into Sikhism every year.¹

The British had similarly started influencing the Punjabis even before their advent in Punjab. According to a Christian historian, an European official of the East India Company, staying at Lahore, had donated a great amount of Rs. 10,000 in those days for the propagation of christianity in Punjab.² The establishment of the British rule adversely affected the performance of the boy prince which had fallen victim to the anarchy. One pillar of his faith thus crumbled.

The Treaty of Bhyrowal, signed on 16th December 1846, had made the British de facto rulers of the province which ultimately resulted in the annexation of the Punjab in March 1849. These Christian rulers started designing the spread of their faith at the cost of Sikhism as well as the Sikhs. The first and foremost attack was made on the filial relationship between the mother queen and her only son Dalip Singh who were separated from each other in such a manner that the innocent and tender-hearted boy could neither say adieu to his mother, nor could know as to

1. Alexander Burnes, quoted by Hoti, Prem Singh, in Ranjit Singh, p 373.
2. Lohelin, C.H., Christianity in Punjab, Pb. Past and Present, April 1973, p. 102.

where, why and in what condition his mother was passing her days. The next attack was made on Dalip Singh himself, who was doomed to be isolated from the Punjabis, Sikhs and the Sikh faith, by removing him to some distant place outside his motherland as a consequence of which he, under the guardianship of Dr. J. S. Lagon, was despatched to Fatehgarh in United Provinces on the morning of 21st December 1849 at nine.¹

As Dr. Lagon tells us, it had been decided that only such persons should be allowed to accompany the boy Dalip Singh whose loyalty had already been tested. The selection-duty was devolved on the innocent boy with the instructions that he would disclose to the persons concerned that he himself was leaving Punjab and only such men should volunteer to go who may prefer to live with him. It was a strange news which bewildered the people to the extent that the Hindus and Sikhs did not opt to accompany. Only one Brahmin agreed to go with his own precondition of returning home after six months.² The men who accompanied the Maharaja were mostly Muslims. Neither any copy of the Holy Granth nor a single reader of it was taken³. How then the boy could maintain his interest in his religion and the Sikh discipline? Thus the second pillar of his faith too fell flat.

On expiry of the promised period, the Punjabi priest returned to Punjab. A Brahmin and former student of Mission school, named Bhajunlal, was then employed as the tutor of the Maharaja. Outwardly though he looked like an Indian Brahmin but inwardly he was a Christian and perhaps it was the only justification of his selection.

This new instructor of the Maharaja seems to have aimed at attracting his pupil towards the Christianity. He used, therefore, to select and relate such portions from the Hindu religious books and in such a way that may cast aspersions in the mind of the Maharaja regarding the veracity and authenticity thereof. This

1. Lagon & Dalip Singh, p. 204.

2. Lagon & Dalip Singh, p. 232.

3. Ibid

was enough to shake the belief of a boy. Being a Brahmin, he could neither have any knowledge of the Sikh history, culture, tenets and discipline, nor being mentally a Christian, he could be supposed to instruct his student in the right direction.

Lord Dalhousie, per contra, had long desired and designed to send the boy to England within two years of his removal from Lahore so that on becoming a major, he might not raise hue and cry for his restoration and claims and the Punjab might not attain sovereignty again. He thus had planned to kill many birds with one stone

Governor General therefore desired to remove the prince during his minority. Guiding Dr. Lagon on the subject, he had advised him, "We are at one in thinking that he should go to England. It is my opinion, as it is yours, that he should go while he is yet what we should consider a boy."¹

The Maharaja virtually had been physically isolated from the Sikhs. As a matter of fact, it had been the earnest desire of Lord Dalhousie to totally cut him off from his brotherhood and faith, and had persued energetically his ambition even at much later a period. "The 'night-cap' appearance of his turban in his strongest national feature," he proposed to Sir George Couper, "Do away with that and he has no longer any outward and visible sign of a Sikh about him", was his instruction² yet another factor of relationship was impeding the progress of the officials and that was the question of marriage of the Maharaja.

He had been betrothed to the daughter of Sardar Chatar Singh Atari since long. The culmination of that relationship in wedlock, the Lord feared, would cause many problems to him. That's why, he wanted to break that knot by hook or by crook. His inner desire soon came out. "The marriage of the Maharaja," he wrote to Dr. Lagon, "is a more difficult matter for us to arrange. I should object decidedly, and do not wish to countenance any alliance with a Sikh family, or sympathy with Sikh feeling."³ He

1. Lord Dalhousie to Dr. Lagon, dated 4-8-1852.

2. Lord Dalhousie to Sir G. Couper, datdd 22-10-1854.

3. John Lagon, Lagon & Dalip Singh, p. 230.

ultimately succeeded in getting dissolved that relationship.

Having fulfilled his desire, he started communicating regarding the marriage of the Maharaja with the princess of Coorg who also had been converted to Christianity¹ and directed the Maharaja to see her at Banaras during his journey whom the Maharaja did not like.² At last, he married Miss Bamba Muller, a student of the American Presbyterian Mission School, during his excursion to Cairo on 12th June 1864 at the British Consulate at Alexandria.³ He had got prior permission of his mother to marry an European lass.⁴ In this way, Maharaja's relationship was established with Christians, as the Lord desired, and gone was the link with Sikhs. This brought the demolition to the third pillar of his faith.

Lord Dalhousie wanted to send the Maharaja to England as a Christian. Otherwise he, it seems, apprehended the behavioral change in the Maharaja to be possibly effected by the company of independent people and atmosphere there. He reminded Dr. Lagon, "If Dalip (Singh) is to go to England, let him be quietly baptised before he goes, and by his own name of Daleep Singh... You are aware that I have been most anxious that there should be no fuss or display connected with Daleep's profession of Christianity."⁵ "I desire no secrecy," he had repeated dichotomously,⁶ but at the same time deprecate notoriety and all approach to a Tumasha."⁶ The Maharaja started responding to the will of his tutor and following his Christian fellows. He saw Guise, Barlow and Tommy Scot praying together at a fixed time while his own priest had been unpunctual in reading the scripture to him. Impressed by the discipline of his friends, he too asked Dr. Lagon to tell his priest to come at the fixed time and punctually.⁶

Bhajnmal had fully succeeded in detracting his pupil from his ancestral faith as well as in instilling the love for Christianity.

1. Recollections of Lady Lagon, p. 150.

2. Dr. Lagon, Lagon & Dalip Singh, p. 221.

3. Ganda Singh, ed., Correspondence of Dalip Singh, p. 94.

4. Lady Lagon, p. 221.

5. Lord Dalhousie to Lagon, 24-9-1852. (6) Ibid, 15-2-1853.

6. John Lagon, Lagon and Dalip Singh, p. 217.

One day, the Maharaja expressed desire to embrace Christianity to Mr. Campbell through Master Thomas Scot, on 8th December 1850. The matter was reported to Lord Dalhousie. Outwardly estranged, Lord asked Dr. Lagon as to how and when the Maharaja was instructed about the new faith and which was the copy of the Bible, alluded to by the princem that was read to him.¹ Lagon had gone to Calcutta to receive his wife returning from England when this incident took place.

The Maharaja had not concealed the matter but on the contrary, informed Dr. Lagon at Calcutta blabbing, "You will be surprised to learn of my determinatain to embrace the Christian religion. I have long doubted the truth of the one I was brought up in, and am convinced of the truth of the religion of the Bible which I have of late made Bajun Lal read portions of to me."²

As a matter of fact, the Governor General had no objection to the manner or the person behind the mental change the Maharaja had gone through. The crux of the matter was the secrecy of his design which he had shared perhaps with Dr. Lagon only who knew the entire procedure. If the work was done by anybody else, it could become the public matter and susceptible to public criticism which he wanted to escape. But to his misfortune, it happened in absence of Dr. Lagon.

In reply to Lord Dalhousie's inquiry, Dr. Lagon reported that the Maharaja had declared his intention of embracing the Christianity at his own descretion, but the Lord would not believe his friend. Mr. Thompson, the Lieutenant Governor of the Provinces was a trustworthy official of the Lord. Dr. Lagon therefore requested him to ask Mr. Tnompson to verify the truth by interviewing the Maharaja.³

It happened so that during the absence of Dr. Lagon, the Maharaja had seen a copy of the Bible in Bhajun Lal's hand and asked if he would sell the same to him. Bhajun Lal was conscious of the influence he had succeeded in exerting over his pupil. He

1. Sir Henry Elliot to Dr. Lagon, Lagon & Dalip Singh, p. 243.

2. Maharaja to Dr. Lagon, dated 9-12-1850.

3. Lagon and Dalip Singh, p. 244.

answered, "I don't want to sell it to you, but I can present you, if you can read a Chapter out of it without any assistance."¹ So, he did read and Bhajun Lal honoured his promise.

The Maharaja then asked his tutor to read him the Bible which the tutor did readily, and on the very first day read sixth chapter St. Mathew. It was after passage of one week that the Maharaja had divulged his desire for conversion to Mr. Campbell who said in reaction, "Well, Maharaj, if you understand it with your conscience, it is far better, and we would be only very happy if you would understand it."²

By that time, the Maharaja had mentally been converted. Only physical conversion in public remained to be made. Two-three days after that, when Bhajun Lal returned from the city at noon, the Maharaja told him that he had become a Christian.³ The tutor asked him, "What did you eat?" And plain came the answer, "I have not eaten anything, but my heart is changed."³

Again, two-three days had elapsed when the Maharaja informed Bhajunlal that he would take tea with Tommy Scott and Robbie Carshore; and on the next day he was seen making tea whereafter all the three took that beverage. Bhajunlal reported that his suggestion to him was, "Very good, Maharaj, do whatever you like...but I tell you one thing, that you must not take tea or do anything until Dr. John Sahib comes back."³

Undoubtedly, the young Maharaja had been living among the Europeans and Christians since 1850 yet he had preserved his Sikh form and food habits. Regarding his clothing, Lord Dalhousie had asked Mr. Couper, "Winter-halter may have arranged Duleep's drapery better than his valet, but has he preserved him a Sikh in outward form, with which drapery has a good deal to do?"⁴

It may easily be said that he had not taken food with any

1. Statement of Bhajunlal, dated 17-1-1851.

2 & 3. Ibid

3. Statement of Bhajunlal, dated 17-1-1851.

4. Correspondence of Dalip Singh, p. 67.

European as was customary among Hindus and Sikhs, because considered impious and to eat with them was taken to be a taboo. Reporting about this aspect of Maharaja's life, Dr. Lagon had said, "Although in deference to the prejudices of his Hindoo attendants he continues to eat only such food as he has hitherto been accustomed to, cooked by his Brahmin servants, he is anxious to have it served up in the European manner, and has asked me to allow a Mahomedan table-attendant to instruct his people, and be present to point out what is required at his meals."¹

Certainly he had preserved his food habits of a Punjabi Sikh, and was habitual of taking his meals separately until the arrival of the Governor General at Fategarh during Christmas in 1851. That day was the first chance of violation of that traditional discipline when he sat on the table 'with Lord and Lady Dalhousie, on occasion of the ladies and gentlemen of the station being invited to dine at his house in order to meet the Viceregal party'² and this violation seems to have been pre-arranged as Dalhousie had disclosed to Mr. Couper about dining with the Maharaja on 27th December in advance.³

Elaborating further, Dr. Lagon had added that "The Maharaja himself is quite aware that particular rules in respect to meats and drinks are not essential to Christianity, but seeing, how much importance is attached to these matters by the Hindoos, he does not wish to give them offence unnecessarily, and refrains from the use of beef."⁴

Soon after this, the Maharaja evinced an interest in European foods as Dr. Lagon had reported from Mussoorie, saying, "He generally eats the Punjabi dishes to which he has been accustomed, but he is evidently acquiring the taste of an English boy with great rapidity."⁵

The word 'taste of an English boy' might have implied that

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1. Lagon's letter to Lord Dalhousie, 1851.
 2. Lagon and Dalip Singh, p. 270, 71.
 3. Correspondence of D.S., p. 49.
 4. Lagon's letter to Dalhousie, 1851.
 5. Lagon and D.S., p. 290.

the Maharaja had then started taking flesh foods, and perhaps beef too, though he tenaciously refrained from drinking even then. His temperance, according to Dr. Lagon, was mainly prompted by his 'recollection of the effects of intoxication, on his uncle, Jowahir Singh for he appears to entertain a dread of being habituated to its use.' Therefore, "the Maharaja has never taken wine in any form."¹

A man is known by the company he keeps as the company plays a significant role in shaping the person. The company of the Europeans and the Christians had influenced the Maharaja who, after some time, desired to look like his friends and wanted to prove his keenness in renouncing the Sikhism by, first of all, shaving his hair. 'This he thought would make him more like his English boy companions' as Lady Lagon assessed, 'and it was much against his will that he was persuaded by Lagon to defer the shearing of his locks until he had been, for at least a year, under probation.'² "He had been long anxious to show," reveals Lady Lagon, "that he was no longer follower of Nanak, the Sikh Prophet, by cutting off the long tress of hair which he, in common with all Sikhs, wore twisted up into a knot above the forehead, and covered with the bright-coloured under turban."³

He had enviably long and beautiful hair which are considered to be embellishment of a true Sikh. Lady Lagon further discloses "When, at length, after a year's probation, he was suffered to cut it off, he brought the coil, long and abundant as a woman's, and presented it to me as a token that he had now done with all it represented."⁴ That obnoxious act of his pulled down the fourth pillar of the Sikh faith of the Maharaja.

The task latently assigned to Bhajunlal had now been accomplished which resulted in practical and final conversion of the Maharaja to the Christianity on 8th March, 1853.⁵

1. Ibid

2. Lagon and D.S., p. 278.

3. Lady Lagon, p. 103.

4. Ibid

5. Lagon's letter to Dalhousie, dated 8-3-1853.

The conversion ceremony took place in a most solemn, simple, touching and impressive manner but without any fuss as per the directions of Lord Dalhousie.¹ So much secrecy was maintained that even most of the neighbouring people were not informed or invited to the ceremony which was conducted by the Chaplain of the station, Mr. W.J. Jay at the dwelling house of the neophyte in the presence of about twenty of the European residents of the station and nearly an equally number of the Maharaja's principle native servants...² The reason advanced for the selection of the home for the ceremony was the church being under repairs while the reality seems to have been the apprehension that the church being a religious place, none could be stopped entering there while the Lord had repeatedly warned Lagon to keep maximum possible secrecy;³ since he was much perturbed by the situation and conglomeration gathered at the time of conversion of the princess of Coorg and the notoriety the ceremony had received.⁴

In the present case even the East India Company had interfered to prohibit any undue publicity and ostentatious announcements.⁵

Maharaja's conversion was to be registered. Rev. Jay wanted three names as witness. The names of Colonel Alexander, Mrs. Login, Mr. Guise were added to that of Dr. Lagon. Some of the native persons, including Jewinda-a favourite Sikh servant did also put their names.⁶

At the end of the ceremony Lady Lagon had struck an idea of mollifying the natives and proposed the use of the Ganges-water for the ceremony. 'seeing the veneration in which the river Ganges is held by all Hindoos, since thereby it would be henceforth sanctified to Duleep Singh with a view and holier association...'⁷ she argued. Jewinda was impressed by it and

1. Lady Lagon, p. 96.
2. Lagon & D.S., p. 305.
3. Dalhousie to Lagon, 24-9-1852.
4. Lagon & D.S., p. 297.
5. Ibid, p. 265.
6. Ibid, p. 306.
7. Lady Lagon, p. 97.

offered to fetch the water in his brass *lotah*. The conversion was acclaimed and the Maharaja was congratulated by many Christians including Frederick Currie.¹ This ceremony had totally banished the Sikh faith from the house and family of the Lion of the Punjab.

The Maharaja was to become a major on 4th September 1854 and Lord Dalhousie had desired since long to remove him to England before that date but this step was to follow his conversion as has already been alluded to, Maharaja on his part too was anxious to go to England. His purpose was to pursue his studies at some public school or university² while the Governor General had thought of grinding his own axe. The Lord hitherto had kept the question of his departure in abeyance on the pretext of awaiting the permission from the Company Headquarters. The possibility of his entry to any higher educational institution he already had ruled out.³ Now, as he had achieved his every other target, and felt the situation quite conducive, the Lord conveyed the permission granted by the Company for Maharaja's travel.⁴

Before the Maharaja girded up his loins for sailing, the Lord presented him a copy of the Bible as a 'departing-gift' 'which I should offer to my own child, as the best of all gifts, since in it, alone is to be found the secret of real happiness either in this world or in that which is to come.'⁵

The Maharaja ignorant of his fate based on the official policy, at last, sailed to England on 19th April 1854⁶ reaching there the next month. He finally settled in Elveden Estate where a big church building, reminiscent of his conversion, tells the story of his isolation even from English christians.

What kind of situation he had to face in England is brought out by the fact that he could not get admission to the university nor he was allowed the company of the noblemen. He was never allowed

1. F. Currie to D S., II-4-1853.

2. Maharaja to Lagon, Aug. 1853.

3. Lord Dalhousie to Dalip Singh, 25-2-1854.

4. Viceroy to Dalip Singh, 31-1-1854.

5. Dalhousie to Dalip Singh, 18-4-1854.

6. Lagon & Dalip Singh, p. 329.

to return to Punjab, even to perform the funeral rites of his mother. On the contrary, he was meted out such a harsh, ignominious treatment that he turned to be a rebel against both the British and the Christians after August 1883.¹ Both were looked upon as his impeccable foes. Soon he started realising his mistakes committed by renouncing his ancestral faith and joining the aliens'. The affliction and agony he had passed through after his conversion and arrival in England had forced him to contemplate on seeking remission from the Sikh Gurus and to rejoin the Sikh religion. Despite the refusal by the Government to permit him to return to India, he remonstrantly decided to venture the journey at all costs. Before embarking on the proposed journey, he addressed a letter to Sardar Sant Singh requesting, "I need not tell you how pleased I shall be (if the Government permits) for you to be present at my receiving Powhl which I trust my cousin Thakur Singh Sandhawalia will administer to me...I put my faith entirely in Sutgooroo who now that I turn to Him for forgiveness I know will not forsake me."²

A few days within this, he made an appeal to his countrymen on the same and allied subjects. "It was not my intention ever to return to reside in India, but Sutgooroo, who governs all destiny, and is more powerful than I, his erring creature has caused circumstances to be so brought that, against my will, I am compelled to quit England, in order to occupy a humble sphere in India. I submit to His Will, being persuaded that whatever is for the best will happen."³

"I now, therefore, beg forgiveness of you, Khalsa Jee, or the Pure, for having forsaken the faith of my ancestors for a foreign religion, but I was very young when I embraced Christianity."⁴

Though the Maharaja had not yet received the Pahul or the baptism, yet the faith he had lost in his ancestors and their

1. Lady Lagon's Recollections, p. 252.

2. Maharaja's Letter to S. Sant Singh, dated 9-3-1886.

3. Appeal to Countrymen, dated 25-3-1886.

4. Ibid

religion had been revived in his mind. By donating a certain amount of money for distribution of Karah Prashad at the Golden Temple, Amritsar and at the tombs of his forefathers, he had counted himself as a Pakka Sikh and had realised joy in disclosing to his servant Jamiyat Rai.¹ "It is my fond desire on reaching Bombay to take the Pahul again and I sincerely hope for your prayers to the Satguru on that solemn occasion...but Satguru's Will be done."^{2a}

The situation in Punjab had undergone an enormous change after the deportation of the Maharaja which he was not conversant with. Most of the Punjabis and the Sikhs had stooped too low to retain their old character and pristine purity of the faith as well as the entire discipline. According to Giani Gian Singh, their customs and rites, faith, allegiance, food and clothing habits-all had undergone change. Consequently, the Sikhism similarly shuddered at the sight of the Sikhs as the cow trembled seeing a Mohamedan (butcher) ²

The aforesaid Appeal of the Maharaja reached those Sikhs. One copy reached Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Asstt. Professor at the Oriental College, Lahore also via his native village Chandhar. He, attributing such letter-writing in the name of the Maharaja to Kukas, passed on the appeal to the Lt. Governor of the Punjab thereby proving his loyalty.³ The reaction of the other sikhs had appeared in a paper of Lahore too.⁴ Unfortunately the Sikhs, instead of expressing solidarity and welcoming the move of the Maharaja, sent him a disdainful and disparaging reply. In the meantime, having pondered over the pros and cons of the case, the Government had arrested the Maharaja alongwith his family members in Aden on 21st April 1886.

1. C. P. Tupper to H.M. Durand, 6-10-1885.

1a. Appeal to Countrymen, dated 25-3-1886.

2. G. Gian Singh, Panth Prakash, p. 3897/2899.

3. Bhai's letter to L. Governor, 25-11-1886.

4. Tribune, Lahore, 17-4-1886.

Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia, accompanied by another Sikh, had already reached at Aden. Availing of the opportunity of their arrival there, the Maharaja decided to take the Pahul there but the British Resident there did not allow the meeting of the trio. After getting the permission from the Governor General he had allowed them to meet in his presence.

The Government apparently and publicly would not interfere in the religious matters. In her Proclamation made in 1858, Queen Victoria had assured the dependant subjects of complete religious freedom. "Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects," she had declared.³ But in the case of the Maharaja, the practice was utterly opposed to their perceptions. His every move was suspected and seen from the political point of view. So much so that the money sent in 1883⁴ through his Purohit from England for offerings at various places remained unutilised for about two years as the offering was not officially permitted. Two years later, when the Governor General was satisfied to the religious nature of the matter only then the offering of Karah Prashad was allowed at the Golden Temple, tomb of Ranjit Singh at Lahore and tomb of Mahan Singh at Gujranwala.⁵ Not only this, even the prayer offered at the Akal Bunga, on this solemn occasion, was watched and reported which was "May the Maharaja Dalip Singh, who has sent presents, money and Karah Parshad enjoy good health and Sikhi-dan."⁶

The reinitiation of the Maharaja similarly was crass religious matter which was equally politicised. Maharaja sought the permission from the Viceroy⁷ who asked the Lt. Governor for his recommendation in the case. He in reply opined that, "Refusal

1. Correspondence of D.S., p. 287.
2. Telegram from M.D.S. to Viceroy, 12-5-1886.
3. Mahajan, V.D., History of India, p. 301.
4. Correspondence of M. Dalip Singh, p. 386.
5. Ibid
6. F. Robert to H.M. Durand, 9-6-87.
7. Telegram dated 12-5-1887.

would be misunderstood and might cause irritation as interference with freedom of religious convictions. It would also magnify his importance. So long as he does not return to India or Punjab, consent will do little if any harm. A few persons might take capital out of conversion, but most of intelligent and loyal Sikhs understood situation and are comparatively indifferent. Intended baptism long rumoured."¹ But he did not purpose the presence of the Resident on occasion of the said ceremony. Almost in the same wording and on the same terms the Viceroy sanctioned the ceremony.²

Though the majority of the Sikhs had changed their ideology, yet there still existed several Sikhs who welcomed the step taken by the Maharaja. According to an intelligence report, they favoured 'his being allowed to re-embrace the Sikh religion if he desires to do so.'³ Another similar report gave much detailed information, "At the Dharmshala in Jhelam and other places the Sikhs have been talking about the Maharaja's expected arrival at Bombay, and seem to be delighted at the idea of his return. They state that they are quite willing to receive him back into the Sikh faith as his conversion to Christianity was effected when he was a child and not possessed of proper reasoning powers. "The rumour was also rife that Baba Khem Singh CIE of Kalkar, district Rawalpindi and Baba Sujan Singh of Una district Hoshiarpur will, it is said, give the Maharaja the Pahul."⁴

The people in Punjab were jubilating over the recent developments though they were perplexed over the place of initiation. People of Hoshiarpur, for instance, were busy in enquiring whether he would be baptised at Amritsar or Apchal Nagar or Anandpur.⁵ Many people desired to be present on the occasion and to greet their Maharaja.

1&2. Lt. Governor to Foreign Secy., dated 14-5-1886.

Viceroy to the Resident, Aden, 15-5-1885.

3. Abstract Pol. Intl., dated 24-4-1886.

4. Ibid, April-May, 1886.

5. Ibid, dated 1-5-1886.

The Sikhs at Ferozepur were no different a lot. 'Though at first they appeared to take little interest in Dalip Singh...' but there was great rejoicing among them when they heard that he intended to take the Pahul at Amritsar.¹

There are many a slip between cup and the lip runs an adage. The initiation was impeded at the last moment by the thought that after his conversion, the Maharaja would require Hindu cooks who were not available there. Only two Sikhs were found whom the Resident could employ for the purpose but that too needed the permission of the Viceroy which was expressly given.² Then the Maharaja was initiated into the Sikh faith on the morning of 25th May 1886 at Aden.³

Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalia and his companion played the leading role in performing the ceremony. He was assisted by Rur Singh Jatt of Kohali (Amritsar), Jawand Singh of Barke (Lahore). Services of two other Sikhs, who had landed from a transport ship, that happened to touch at Aden, were also utilised for the purpose.⁴ The Resident kept himself aloof but took steps to ensure there being no objectionable conversation with the five Sikhs who were present.⁵

The requirements of the Maharaja did naturally increase on his becoming the Sikh. He, therefore, submitted a memorandum to the Resident containing the following demands :

1. Sikh Grunthee or Scripture Reader.
1. Attendant with copy of the Granth.
2. Cooks, if not Punjabis, then high caste Hindus.
2. Water carriers (Hindus). 4 Personal attendants, may be of any caste, but should be highly respectable.
- 6 Bearers or valets. 3 Dhobie (Washerman).

1. Abstract of Pol, Intelligence, 8-5-1886.
2. Note by Secretary, 20-5-1886.
3. Correspondence of D.S., p. 321.
4. Ibid, p. 346.
5. Brigadier Gen. Hogg H.M. to Durand, 25-5-1886.

1 Durzee (tailor), 1 Mehtur (Sweeper), 8 Burkundazes (Musketeers)¹

He thought to provide Dhobie, Durzee and Mehtur locally while cooks, personal attendants, valets and water carriers were to be obtained from Bombay.²

It was to be decided by the Government whether he needs the Grunthee and attendant. Sir Charles Aitchison considered the matter to be a private one. So it was decided that the Maharaja may employ the men of his choice but they should be distinctly given to understand that they will share his fortune, and will not be able to return without the permission of the Government.³

It was deemed to be impossible for the Government to keep, and for the detainee to remain at Aden. He was goaded to return to Egypt or England. Maharaja's conscience would never allow him to return to England as he had developed great excretion for that country and people thereof. He, therefore, opted for France.⁴

The reembracement of the Maharaja was jovially received by the Sikhs. The Government with a view to know the pulse of the masses had deputed a Mohamedan, as a special agent, to the Punjab who submitted his report confirming that 'According to the doctrines of Sikhism, a king can not commit sin; hence, since the date of Dalip Singh's baptism he is looked upon as true sikh by every Sikh in the Punjab, and according to the prophecies of Guru Gobind Singh, they look upon him as their true leader.'⁵

All the hardships and insolence notwithstanding, the Maharaja had been then imbued in faith on the Sikh Gurus and religion. When his plan of reaching Punjab through Russia could not succeed to his expectations, he had desperately to return to Geneva whence he sent a letter to the Indian people and princes

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1. Gen. Hogg (Resident) to Viceroy, 29-5-86.
 2. Ibid
 3. W. Meworth Young to H.M. Durand, 31-5-86.
 4. Telegram from Resident to Govt. 3-6-86.
 5. Pol. Intelligence, June 1887.

by which he strove to attract special attention of the Sikhs. Imploring them in the name of Guru Gobind Singh to help him, he had clarified that 'Shri Khalsa Ji, for you, our cause is not only national but also religious.'¹

After his return to Sikhism, there was no such Sikh in his company who could instruct him in Sikh traditions, history, philosophy and scriptural texts etc., yet he had been mentally attracted towards all these. He implicitly believed in the prophecy made by the tenth Guru about his restoration and trusted in its truth,² so much so that in his petition submitted to the Tzar of Russia too he had quoted this prophecy in support of his claims to his political restoration to the throne of Punjab.³ He used to ascribe his expected success in his political struggle to the Almighty.⁴ In case of his restoration, he had planned to announce some favours to the Indians and he had put the All India ban on the kine-killing on the top of that list⁵. since the question of cow protection is related to the sentiments of the Indian populace.

Maharaja later on fell ill. A stroke of paralysis had worsened his condition which eventuated in his expiration at the Grand Hotel, Paris on 23rd October 1893. He thus was born and died as a sikh with the difference that his birth had taken place on the soil of the Punjab in the Sikh environment and at the palace while his death came at a hotel in the land and hands of Christians. He yearned and struggled to visit his motherland during his life but he was not destined to have this privilege even after his death. Nor his funeral rites could be performed in Indian or Sikh manner.

1. Maharaja to Indian People, 25-6-1889.
2. Supplement statement of S. Budh Singh, 15-1-1887.
3. Petition to the Tzar, 10-5-1887.
4. From Russia to Indian Princes.
5. To Indian princes from Geneva. 25-6-1889.

The Maharaja who had been ambitious for the throne of Punjab remained unable to have a small piece of land for his dead body too. His son buried him close to his church by the side of the graves of other family members. And thus perished the house of the Lion of the Punjab.



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